



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

July 27, 2015

The Honorable Steve Russell
U.S. House of Representatives
128 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Russell:

Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to reform our Universal Service Fund ("USF") mechanisms to support broadband deployment in rural America. The universal service program is one of the most important tools at our disposal to ensure that consumers and businesses in rural America have the same opportunities as their urban and suburban counterparts to be active participants in the 21st century economy. I share your goal of ensuring that the universal service program better reflects today's marketplace and technology in areas served by rate-of-return carriers.

As I explained at the Senate Commerce Committee's FCC Oversight Hearing earlier this year, resolving this issue will require all the stakeholders to work together and make hard decisions to reach consensus on the best path forward. Everybody agrees that the goal of any changes should be supporting broadband in rural areas. With that in mind, I directed my staff and staff members from the Commission's Wireline Bureau to meet with stakeholders in the rate-of-return community. We have encouraged all stakeholders in the rate-of-return community to work together to develop an approach that both has the widespread support of the rate-of-return community and meets the principles unanimously outlined by the Commission in our April 2014 *Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*.

I share your concern about the state of rural broadband deployment. I also recognize the substantial time, effort, and resources that have been invested in this effort to date by stakeholders in the rate-of-return community to address these issues. I am committed to finding a path forward by the end of the year. But it is important to have a solution – or set of solutions – that creates the right incentives to deploy modern networks throughout rural America, meets the Commission's overarching policy objectives, and has the widespread support of the rate-of-return carrier community.

To that end, it is encouraging that the stakeholders appear to have come to a consensus on the notion of a "two-path" approach to reforming the program that is comprised of both a model-based path and updates to the existing mechanisms, but work remains with respect to the details of how we would update those support mechanisms. We will continue to engage with stakeholders, and we expect them to continue to engage with us, to ensure that any reform of these universal service programs successfully delivers on our shared goal of more robust broadband throughout rural America.

Page 2—The Honorable Steve Russell

I look forward to working with you to make continued progress on the deployment of broadband to consumers throughout rural areas a reality.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Wheeler", with a stylized, cursive script.

Tom Wheeler

July 27, 2015

The Honorable Kurt Schrader
U.S. House of Representatives
108 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Schrader:

Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to reform our Universal Service Fund (“USF”) mechanisms to support broadband deployment in rural America. The universal service program is one of the most important tools at our disposal to ensure that consumers and businesses in rural America have the same opportunities as their urban and suburban counterparts to be active participants in the 21st century economy. I share your goal of ensuring that the universal service program better reflects today’s marketplace and technology in areas served by rate-of-return carriers.

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Sincerely,



Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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OFFICE OF
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July 27, 2015

The Honorable Austin Scott
U.S. House of Representatives
516 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Scott:

Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to reform our Universal Service Fund ("USF") mechanisms to support broadband deployment in rural America. The universal service program is one of the most important tools at our disposal to ensure that consumers and businesses in rural America have the same opportunities as their urban and suburban counterparts to be active participants in the 21st century economy. I share your goal of ensuring that the universal service program better reflects today's marketplace and technology in areas served by rate-of-return carriers.

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Tom Wheeler



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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

July 27, 2015

The Honorable Jim Sensenbrenner
U.S. House of Representatives
2449 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Sensenbrenner:

Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to reform our Universal Service Fund ("USF") mechanisms to support broadband deployment in rural America. The universal service program is one of the most important tools at our disposal to ensure that consumers and businesses in rural America have the same opportunities as their urban and suburban counterparts to be active participants in the 21st century economy. I share your goal of ensuring that the universal service program better reflects today's marketplace and technology in areas served by rate-of-return carriers.

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Page 2—The Honorable Jim Sensenbrenner

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Tom Wheeler



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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

July 27, 2015

The Honorable John Shimkus
U.S. House of Representatives
2452 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Shimkus:

Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to reform our Universal Service Fund ("USF") mechanisms to support broadband deployment in rural America. The universal service program is one of the most important tools at our disposal to ensure that consumers and businesses in rural America have the same opportunities as their urban and suburban counterparts to be active participants in the 21st century economy. I share your goal of ensuring that the universal service program better reflects today's marketplace and technology in areas served by rate-of-return carriers.

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Tom Wheeler



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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OFFICE OF
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July 27, 2015

The Honorable Mike Simpson
U.S. House of Representatives
2312 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Simpson:

Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to reform our Universal Service Fund ("USF") mechanisms to support broadband deployment in rural America. The universal service program is one of the most important tools at our disposal to ensure that consumers and businesses in rural America have the same opportunities as their urban and suburban counterparts to be active participants in the 21st century economy. I share your goal of ensuring that the universal service program better reflects today's marketplace and technology in areas served by rate-of-return carriers.

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Tom Wheeler



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OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

July 27, 2015

The Honorable Louise M. Slaughter
U.S. House of Representatives
2469 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congresswoman Slaughter:

Thank you for your letter urging the Commission to reform our Universal Service Fund ("USF") mechanisms to support broadband deployment in rural America. The universal service program is one of the most important tools at our disposal to ensure that consumers and businesses in rural America have the same opportunities as their urban and suburban counterparts to be active participants in the 21st century economy. I share your goal of ensuring that the universal service program better reflects today's marketplace and technology in areas served by rate-of-return carriers.

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Page 2—The Honorable Louise M. Slaughter

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Sincerely,



Tom Wheeler



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OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

July 27, 2015

The Honorable Adrian Smith
U.S. House of Representatives
2241 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Smith:

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Page 2—The Honorable Adrian Smith

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Sincerely,



Tom Wheeler



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THE CHAIRMAN

July 27, 2015

The Honorable Jason Smith
U.S. House of Representatives
2230 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Smith:

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Tom Wheeler



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THE CHAIRMAN

July 27, 2015

The Honorable Lamar Smith
U.S. House of Representatives
2409 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Smith:

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